IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-21 without prejudice or disclaimer to the subject matter therein. Please add new claims 22-42 as follows.

22. A data conversion apparatus for use with an external recording apparatus and an external equipment, and for use in converting data including audio contents to superdistribution format data and outputting the superdistribution format data to be supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein,

said superdistribution format data including said audio contents and attribute information which represents at least a charge condition permitting creation of a copy of the audio contents,

said data conversion apparatus comprising:

a data transmission/receiving section for transmitting and receiving data to and from the external equipment;

a data format judging section for judging whether or not the data is of a superdistribution format;

an attribute information obtaining section for identifying the audio contents of the data and obtaining attribute information corresponding to the identified audio contents from the external equipment via said data transmission/receiving section;

a data format conversion section for converting the audio contents together with the obtained attribute information to the superdistribution data format; and

a controller for controlling said data transmission/receiving section, data format judging section, attribute information obtaining section and data format conversion section,

wherein, in a case where said data format judging section judges that the received data is not of the superdistribution format, said controller controls said attribute information obtaining section so as to obtain the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external equipment, and wherein said controller controls said data format conversion section so as to convert the received audio contents together with the obtained attribute information into the superdistribution format data, so that the resultant data converted to the superdistribution data format is outputted and supplied to the external recording apparatus.

23. The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 22 further comprising a data outputting section, wherein in a case where said data format judging section judges that the received data is of the superdistribution format, said controller controls said data outputting section so as to supply the received superdistribution format data to the external recording apparatus.

24. The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 23 further comprising: a recording section for recording the superdistribution format data; and

a charging section for executing a charging operation based on the charge condition of the attribute information,

wherein said controller controls said charging section so as to execute the charging operation of the superdistribution format data based on the charge condition of the attribute information when a copy of the superdistribution format data read out of said recording section is supplied to the external recording apparatus to be recorded therein.

25. The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 24, for use with a disc medium, an external server, and a digital network, wherein said data transmission/receiving section includes a data read-out portion for reading the data out of the disc medium recorded with the data containing the audio contents and includes a network interface which receives the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external server via the digital network,

and wherein said attribute information obtaining section obtains identification information read out of the disc medium and transmits the obtained identification information to the external server via the digital network and receives attribute information corresponding to the audio data recorded in the disc medium from the external server.

26. The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein said attribute information obtaining section obtains the identification information of the disc medium by way of a user direct input operation.

27. The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein said attribute information obtaining section obtains the identification information of the disc medium by extracting the number of pieces and reproduction time of the audio contents recorded in the disc medium.

28. The data conversion apparatus as claimed in claim 25, for use with an external charging device, wherein said network interface is connected to the external charging device via the digital network so that said charging section executes the charging operation based on the charge information in cooperation with the external charging device.

29. A data conversion method for use with an external recording stage and an external equipment, and for use in converting data including audio contents to superdistribution format data and outputting the superdistribution format data to be supplied to the external recording stage to be recorded therein,

said superdistribution format data including said audio contents and attribute information which represents at least a charge condition permitting the creation of a copy of the audio contents,

said data conversion method comprising:

transmitting and receiving data to and from the external equipment;

judging whether or not the data is of a superdistribution format;

identifying the audio contents of the data and obtaining the attribute information corresponding to the identified audio contents from the external equipment;

converting the audio contents together with the obtained attribute information to the superdistribution data format; and

controlling said data transmission/receiving, data format judging, attribute information obtaining and data format conversion, such that:

in a case where said data format judging judges that the received data is not of the superdistribution format, said attribute information obtaining is so controlled as to obtain the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external equipment, and said data format conversion is so controlled as to convert the received audio contents together with the obtained

attribute information into the superdistribution format data, so that the resultant data converted to the superdistribution data format is outputted and supplied to the external recording stage.

30. The data conversion method as claimed in claim 29 further comprising data outputting, wherein in a case where said data format judging judges that the received data is of the superdistribution format, said controlling controls said data outputting so as to supply the received super distribution format data to the external recording stage.

31. The data conversion method as claimed in claim 30 further comprising: recording the superdistribution format data; and

executing a charging operation based on the charge condition of the attribute information,

wherein said controlling controls said charging so as to execute the charging operation of the superdistribution format data based on the charge condition of the attribute information when a copy of the superdistribution format data read out by said recording is supplied to the external recording stage to be recorded therein.

32. The data conversion method as claimed in claim 31, for use with a disc medium, an external server, a network interface, and a digital network, wherein said data transmission/ receiving includes reading the data out of the disc medium recorded with the data containing the audio contents and includes receiving the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents by the network interface from the external server via the digital network,

and wherein said attribute information obtaining obtains identification information read out of the disc medium and transmits the obtained identification information to the external server via the digital network and receives attribute information corresponding to the audio data recorded in the disc medium from the external server.

33. The data conversion method as claimed in claim 32, wherein said attribute information obtaining obtains the identification information of the disc medium by way of a user direct input operation.

34. The data conversion method as claimed in claim 32, wherein said attribute information obtaining obtains the identification information of the disc medium by extracting the number of pieces and reproduction time of the audio contents recorded in the disc medium.

35. The data conversion method as claimed in claim 32, for use with an external charging device, wherein the network interface is connected to the external charging device via the digital network so that said charging executes the charging operation based on the charge information in cooperation with the external charging device.

36. A machine-readable program storage medium storing a program of a data conversion method for use with an external recording stage and an external equipment, and for use in converting data including audio contents to superdistribution format data and outputting the superdistribution format data to be supplied to the external recording stage to be recorded therein,

said superdistribution format data including said audio contents and attribute information which represents at least a charge condition permitting the creation of a copy of the audio contents,

said data conversion method comprising:

transmitting and receiving data to and from the external equipment;

judging whether or not the data is of a superdistribution format;

identifying the audio contents of the data and obtaining the attribute information corresponding to the identified audio contents from the external equipment;

converting the audio contents together with the obtained attribute information to the superdistribution data format; and

controlling said data transmission/receiving, data format judging, attribute information obtaining and data format conversion, such that:

in a case where said data format judging judges that the received data is not of the superdistribution format, said attribute information obtaining is so controlled as to obtain the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents from the external equipment, and said data format conversion is so controlled as to convert the received audio contents together with the obtained attribute information into the superdistribution format data, so that the resultant data converted to the superdistribution data format is outputted and supplied to the external recording stage.

37. The machine-readable program storage medium as claimed in claim 36 further comprising data outputting, wherein in a case where said data format judging judges that the received data is of the superdistribution format, said controlling controls said data outputting so as to supply the received super distribution format data to the external recording stage.

38. The machine-readable program storage medium as claimed in claim 37 further comprising: recording the superdistribution format data; and

executing a charging operation based on the charge condition of the attribute information,

wherein said controlling controls said charging so as to execute the charging operation of the superdistribution format data based on the charge condition of the attribute information when a copy of the superdistribution format data read out by said recording is supplied to the external recording stage to be recorded therein.

39. The machine-readable program storage medium as claimed in claim 38, for use with a disc medium, an external server, a network interface, and a digital network, wherein said data transmission/ receiving includes reading the data out of the disc medium recorded with the data containing the audio contents and includes receiving the attribute information corresponding to the audio contents by the network interface from the external server via the digital network,

and wherein said attribute information obtaining obtains identification information read out of the disc medium and transmits the obtained identification information to the external server via the

digital network and receives attribute information corresponding to the audio data recorded in the disc medium from the external server.

40. The machine-readable program storage medium as claimed in claim 39, wherein said attribute information obtaining obtains the identification information of the disc medium by way of a user direct input operation.

41. The machine-readable program storage medium as claimed in claim 39, wherein said attribute information obtaining obtains the identification information of the disc medium by extracting the number of pieces and reproduction time of the audio contents recorded in the disc medium.

42. The machine-readable program storage medium as claimed in claim 39, for use with an external charging device, wherein the network interface is connected to the external charging device via the digital network so that said charging executes the charging operation based on the charge information in cooperation with the external charging device.